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Holy Scripture

and

Modern Negation

by

Professor James Orr, D.D. 6844-1912



*This address was delivered in Knox Church,  
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# Holy Scripture and Modern Negations

BY PROF. JAMES ORR, D.D.

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# **Holy Scripture and Modern Negations**

LECTURE BY PROF. JAMES ORR, D.D., OF SCOTLAND,  
IN KNOX CHURCH, TORONTO

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## INTRODUCTION

SIR WILLIAM MORTIMER CLARK (Chairman), said:—I count it a very high honor indeed to have been appointed by the Bible League to preside at this meeting. Not only do I feel it an honor to be present to-night because from the very depth of my heart I sympathize with this League and with the objects which it has in view, but I am particularly glad to be here to-night because we have with us a distinguished theologian, a man whose praise is in all the churches, and whose name to me is particularly grateful because he was the friend of my venerated departed friend, Dr. Caven. The visit of Or. Orr seems to have been timed at the psychological moment, for he has come amongst us shortly after the attention of our citizens has been called to questions affecting the Scriptures, the belief in them, and many doctrines of our faith. The questions regarding the higher criticism and the new theology have occupied our minds, and of those two things I may say they are *arcades ambo* both.

In Toronto many expressions of opinion, both public and private, have been made in relation to those great subjects, and I feel confident that there has been in those expressions a manifestation of unbelief which

is most distressing to those who are interested in the Word of God. When I find men giving expression to such opinions as those which I have read, and to which I have listened, and who have been brought up in the old belief and are still more or less affected by the memories of that belief, I feel apprehensive of what is to come to a new generation who have been brought up and will be brought up under such teachings as those which we have recently heard of. I look forward to that with grave apprehension; for if things are now as they are, they will be much more intensified in future.

I have read a good deal of the opinions of those who call themselves higher critics, and who are advocates of what is known as the new theology, or the new school of thought—men who think they are advanced, and who continually speak of themselves as being advanced, and of all others as having no common sense, almost. And what is the result of it all? I cannot conceal from myself the feeling that these opinions will lead not merely to advanced scepticism, but will certainly lead to Unitarianism.

I have read a good many books published in connection with these matters; and, just to specify one, a book with which many of you may be familiar which has recently been published, called “In the Days of His Flesh”—a book which was heralded as containing the last results of criticism, and as a book very conservative in its tone. I read with great interest the account which the writer gives there of the healing of the demoniac at Gadara by our Saviour. The writer boldly denies the possibility of demoniacal possession. He gives no authority for his opinion,



but he states it as a fact. Then he says—to get out of the difficulty—that Christ our Saviour, the one who was pre-eminently the Truth—deceived a man—made these swine run down and be drowned in the sea in order to make the man believe that He had cast them out of him. Now, that is a style of interpretation which I think is utterly contradictory and dishonoring to the Son of God, and which certainly also takes from the Word of God its very life; and you will find, in many books which profess most profound loyalty to the Word of God, doctrines and teachings which are utterly subversive of its power and authority.

I am delighted that Dr. Orr has come here because the minds of many in this community require to be steadied and enlightened in regard to the great things of God's word and of God's law; and it is a matter to me of profound satisfaction that Dr. Orr has come here at this time—come at a time apparently when he was most required; and I hope that every one of us will benefit by his instructions to-night, and by the instructions which he will give to us during his stay in Toronto. I hope for very much from his visit, and I hope that every one of you will avail yourselves of every opportunity of receiving the benefit of those instructions. His visit was greatly needed at this time. I must say, in relation to the period which we passed through a few weeks ago in Toronto, in relation to those questions of higher criticism and the new theology, there was a very marked contrast between what was said in connection with those subjects in the various meetings which were held then, and the meetings of the Laymen's Missionary Movement. I

heard nothing there of new theology or higher criticism. I am very glad to think that the minds of the laity in Toronto seemed to be more settled and more sound in connection with these subjects than are those who profess to be teachers of the Word of God. And it is a great matter that it is so—a matter on which we ought all to congratulate ourselves—that the laymen of our churches are sound in faith, as a rule.

The Chairman then introduced Rev. Prof. Orr, D.D., who spoke as follows:—

I think I ought to begin to-night with an expression of regret that I was unable to keep my appointment with you last evening. It was not my fault, but my misfortune, that I was not here in time to address you as I had promised to do. The pleasant humors of the Atlantic are responsible for that disappointment to you, if disappointment it was. And now, to prevent a second disappointment, there is just one word I should like to say at the outset. I have spoken of the pleasant humors of the Atlantic. I have just had a little glimpse, as I came along, of the pleasant humors of your Toronto press. I find that I am represented there as a very terrible sort of an individual; a man bent on wrathful destruction of some kind; a man who has come to denounce and to flagellate, and I don't know what all. I just want to assure you, in order to prevent any disappointment, that a more peacefully minded man never entered your fair city. I come on no mission of wrath whatever, and I mean to denounce nobody. I have no right to, and I don't intend to interfere with your local controversies at all. I have come here on a mission that is positive, and not on a mission that is negative; a mission that is constructive, not a mission that is controversial. I have not come to foment or stir up strife or controversy, or import any element of bitterness into it, but, if I can, try to help people to understand each other, and allay any feeling that may have been aroused. I hope that is a perfectly Christian sentiment. Well, I have taken to-night a somewhat general subject, and it will have to be dealt with in an even more general manner than I should like to deal with it. It is now a quarter to nine o'clock, and time has been flying so fast that I

will have to leave aside many things that I should like to have said. Perhaps I may have an opportunity on other occasions. Therefore you will bear with me if my remarks to-night are somewhat of an introductory and general kind.

I have taken as a subject to-night the Holy Scripture itself—

### **“HOLY SCRIPTURE AND MODERN NEGATIONS.”**

And the question I have in view is: whether to-day in the midst of all this criticism and unsettlement we know about there is for the Christian Church and for the world a tenable doctrine of Holy Scripture; and if there is, what that doctrine is. Now, that is unquestionably a very pressing question at the present time. Is there a book which we can regard as the repository of a true revelation of God and an infallible guide in the way of life, and as to our duties to God and man? That is a question of immense importance to us all. Fifty years ago, perhaps less time, that question hardly needed to be asked among Christian people. It was universally conceded, taken for granted, that there is such a book; that book we call the Bible. Here, it was believed, is a volume which is an inspired record of the whole will of God for man's salvation. Believe the teaching of that book, follow its guidance, you cannot stumble, you cannot err in attaining the supreme end of existence, in finding salvation, in grasping the prize of a glorious immortality. Well, can that be said to-day? Now, I really fear it cannot. There is no disguising the fact that we live in an age when, even within the church,



there is much uneasy and distrustful feeling about the Holy Scriptures—a hesitancy to lean upon them as an authority and to use them as the weapons of precision they once were; with a corresponding anxiety to find some surer basis in external church authority, or, with others, in Christ Himself, or again in a Christian consciousness, as it is named—a surer basis for Christian belief and life. We often hear in these days reference to the substitution, in Protestantism, of an

### **INFALLIBLE BIBLE FOR AN INFALLIBLE CHURCH;**

and the implication is that the one idea is just as baseless as the other. Sometimes the idea is taken up, has become a very common one, that the thought of an authority external to ourselves—to our own reason or conscience or spiritual nature—must be wholly given up. Only that can be accepted which carries its authority within itself by the appeal it makes to reason or to our spiritual being, and therein lies the judge for us of what is true and what is false.

Well, I would just like to remark in passing that this last is a proposition that has an element of truth in it; it may be true or may be false according as we interpret it. Now, as it is frequently interpreted it leaves the Scriptures—but more than that, it leaves Jesus Christ Himself—without any authority for us save that with which our own minds see fit to clothe Him. But what I want specially to say to you in regard to the

## INFALLIBLE BIBLE AND THE INFALLIBLE CHURCH,

is this: it is proper to point out that there is a considerable difference between these two things—between the idea of an authoritative Scripture and the idea of an infallible Church or an infallible Pope, in the Roman sense of that word. It may be a clever antithesis to say that Protestantism substituted the idea of an infallible Book for the older Romish dogma of an infallible Church; but the antithesis, the contrast, unfortunately has one fatal inaccuracy about it. **The idea of the authority of Scripture is not younger, but older, than Romanism.** It is not a late invention of Protestantism. It is not something that Protestants invented and substituted for the Roman conception of the infallible Church; but **it is the original conception that lies in the Scriptures themselves.** There is a great difference there. It is a belief—this belief in the Holy Scripture—which was accepted and acted upon by the Church of Christ from the first. The Bible itself claims to be **an authoritative Book**; if you will, **an infallible guide** to the true knowledge of God and of the way of salvation; and this view is implied in every reference made to it so far as it then existed, by Christ and His apostles. That the New Testament, the work of the apostles and of apostolic men, does not stand on a lower level of inspiration and authority than the Old Testament, is, I think, hardly worth arguing. And in that sense, as a body of writings of Divine authority, the Books of the Old and the New Testament were accepted by Christ and His apostles and by the Church of the post-apostolic age.

Take the writings of any of the early Church fathers—I have waded through them wearily as a teacher of Church History—take Tertullian or Origen, or others of them, and you will find their works saturated with references to Scripture. You will find the Scriptures treated in precisely the same way as they are used in the Biblical literature of to-day, namely, as the ultimate authority on the matters of which they speak. I do the fathers an injustice in this comparison, for I find things said and written by teachers of the Church to-day about the Holy Scriptures which those early fathers would never have permitted themselves to utter. Well, but the fact remains that it has become fashionable among a class of religious teachers to speak disparagingly of or belittle the Holy Scriptures as an authoritative rule of faith for the Church. It is useless to deny that the leading cause of this has been the trend which the criticism of the Holy Scriptures has assumed during the last half century or more.

Now, don't expect that I am going to enter on any general tirade against Higher Criticism. I am not going to use the term "Higher Criticism" almost at all. I am not using it, because I am anxious to avoid the impression that everything that comes under the name of criticism, or even Higher Criticism is evil, or is due to an anti-supernaturalistic prejudice. By all means I would say, let criticism have its rights. Let purely literary questions about the Bible receive full and fair discussion. Let the structure of books be impartially examined. If a reverent science has light to throw on the composition or authorship or age of these Books, let its voice be heard. If this thing is of God we

cannot overthrow it; if it be of man, or so far as it is of man, or so far as it comes in conflict with the reality of things in the Bible, it will come to naught—as in my opinion a great deal of it is fast coming to-day through its own excesses. No fright, therefore, need be taken at the mere word, “Criticism.”

Then on the other hand, we are not bound to accept every wild critical theory that any critic may choose to put forward and assert, as the final word on this matter. We are entitled, nay, we are bound, to look at the presuppositions on which that criticism proceeds, and to ask how far is the criticism controlled by those presuppositions? We are bound to look at the evidence by which this theory is supported, and to ask, is it really borne out by that evidence? And when theories are put forward with every confidence as fixed results, and we find them as we observe them still in constant process of evolution and change, constantly becoming more complicated, more extreme, more fanciful, we are entitled to enquire, Is this the certainty that it was alleged to be? **Now, that is my complaint against much of the current criticism of the Bible—not that it is criticism, but that it starts from the wrong basis, that it proceeds by arbitrary methods, and that it arrives at results which I think are demonstrably false results.** That is a great deal to say, no doubt, but perhaps I shall have some justification to offer for it before I am done.

Well, as I say, I am not going to enter into any general tirade against criticism; but it is useless to deny that a great deal of what is called criticism is responsible for this uncertainty and unsettlement of feeling there is at the present time about the Holy



Scriptures. I don't speak specially of those whose philosophical standpoint compels them to take up an attitude of negation to supernatural revelation, or to books which profess to convey such a revelation. Criticism of this kind, criticism that starts from the basis of the denial of the supernatural, has of course to be reckoned with. In its hands every thing is engineered from that basis. There is the denial, to begin with, that God ever has entered into human history, in word and deed, in any supernatural way, with the necessary result that whatever in the Bible affirms or flows from such interposition of God is expounded or explained away. **The Scriptures, on this showing, instead of being the lively oracles of God, become simply the fragmentary remains of an ancient Hebrew literature, the chief value of which would seem to be the employment it affords to the critic to dissect it into its various parts, to overthrow the tradition of the past in regard to it, and to frame ever new, ever changing, ever more wonderful theories of the origin of the books and the so-called legends they contain.** Leaving, however, such futile, rationalistic criticism out of account—and that is not the kind of criticism with which we as Christian people have chiefly to deal in our own circles—I think it must be felt—and whether felt or not, it is certainly the case—that there is an immense change of attitude on the part of many who still sincerely hold faith in the supernatural revelation of God. Now, I find it difficult to describe this tendency. I am very desirous not to describe it in any way which would do injustice to any Christian thinker. I find it difficult, I say, to describe the tendency, it is attended by so many signs of an

ambiguous character. Jesus is recognized by most who represent it as

### **THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD,**

though with shadings off into more or less indefinite assertions even on that fundamental article which make it sometimes doubtful where the writers exactly stand. The process of thought in regard to Scripture is easily traced. First, there is an ostentatious throwing overboard, joined with some expression of contempt, of what is called the verbal inspiration of Scripture—a very much abused term. Jesus is still spoken of as the highest revealer, and it is allowed that His words, if only we could get at them—and on the whole it is thought we can—furnish the highest rule of guidance for time and for eternity. But even criticism, we are told, must have its rights. Even in the New Testament the Gospels go into the crucible, and in the name of synoptical criticism, historical criticism, they are subject to wonderful processes, in the course of which much of the history gets melted out or is peeled off as Christian characteristics. Jesus, as we are reminded, was still a man of his generation, liable to error in his human knowledge, and the limitations in his conceptions and judgments have to be allowed for. Of course he was all wrong about the demoniacs, as you say, sir (referring to Chairman), though perhaps I may assure you that the writer you spoke of and quoted—I don't know with what consistency—has since, in an article of his which I read, affirmed the personality of the evil one and defended demoniacal possession. There is that much comfort. Well, St. Paul is alleged to be still largely dominated

by his inheritance of Rabbinical and Pharisaic ideas. He had been brought up a Pharisee, brought up with the rabbis, and when he became a Christian carried a great deal of that into his Christian thought, and we have to strip off that thought when we come to the study of his Epistles. He is therefore not a teacher we can follow further than our own judgment of Christian truth leads us. That gets rid of a great deal that is inconvenient about Paul. If these things are done in the "green tree" of the New Testament, it is easy to see what will be done in the "dry tree" of the Old?

The conclusions of the more advanced school of critics are here generally accepted as once for all settled, with the result—in my judgment, at **any** rate—that the Old Testament is immeasurably lowered from the place it once held in our reverence. Its earlier history, down to about the age of the Kings, is largely resolved into myths and legends and fictions. It is ruled out of the category of history proper. No doubt we are told that the legends are just as good as the history, and perhaps a little better—and that the ideas which they convey to us are just as good, coming in the form of legends, as if they came in the form of fact.

### **I PREFER TO TAKE MY IDEAS OUT OF THE FACTS.**

Its laws, when we come to deal with them, lack Divine authority. They are the products of human minds at various ages. Its prophecies are the utterances of men who possessed indeed the spirit of God, which is only in fuller degree what other good men, re-

ligious teachers in all countries, have possessed—not a spirit qualifying, for example, to give real predictions, or to bear authoritative messages of the truth to men. And so, in this whirl and confusion of theories—you will find them in our magazines, you will find them in our encyclopaedias, you will find them in our reviews, you will find them in Professor Jordan's book which has appeared to annihilate me as well as others—but still I am here—in this whirl and confusion of theories, is it any wonder that many should be disquieted and unsettled, and feel as if the ground which they had been wont to rest on was giving way beneath their feet? And so the question comes back with fresh urgency. What is to be said of the place and value of Holy Scripture?

### **IS THERE A TENABLE DOCTRINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF TO-DAY?**

Now, I would like very much if I had time to argue out that question with you with some degree of fullness. It seems to me that one of the clamant needs of our time, and a prime need of the Church, is just a replacement of Holy Scripture with due regard, I grant, to any really ascertained facts in regard to its literary history, in the faith and lives of men, as the truly inspired and divinely sealed record of God's revealed will for men in the great things of the soul. But then, is such a position tenable? In the fierce light of criticism that beats upon the documents and upon the revelation of God's Grace they profess to contain, can this position be maintained? Now, I venture to think, indeed I am very sure, it can. My time is rapidly going away, but



I want to do more than simply to refer to the forms of attack that are being made on Holy Scripture. I want to do some little thing, if I can, to help to that more positive conception of Holy Scripture. It is a small thing to criticise and complain, to deal only with negations; one must try to reach positive results, to do something to construct. Let me try for a few moments, therefore, simply to indicate—for I can do hardly any more—the lines along which I would answer the question, Have we or can we have a tenable doctrine of Holy Scripture?

Now, for a satisfactory doctrine of Holy Scripture—and by that I mean a doctrine which is satisfactory for the needs of the Christian Church, a doctrine which answers to the claim the Scripture makes for itself, to the place it holds in Christian life and Christian experience, to the needs of the Christian Church for edification and evangelization, and in other ways—I say, for a satisfactory doctrine of Holy Scripture it seems to me that three things are indispensably necessary. There is necessary **first**, I would venture to say, a more positive view of the structure of the Bible than at present obtains in many circles. There is necessary, **second**, the acknowledgment of a true supernatural revelation of God in the history and religion of the Bible. There is necessary, **third**, the recognition of a true supernatural inspiration in the record of that revelation. These three things, to my mind, go together—a more positive view of the structure of the Bible; the recognition of the supernatural revelation embodied in the Bible; and a recognition in accordance with the Bible's own claim of a supernatural inspiration in the record of the Bible. Now, can we

affirm these three things? Will they bear the test, I think they will.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE.

I spoke first of the structure of the Bible, and I say there is needed a more positive idea of that structure than is at present prevalent. You take much of the criticism and you find the Bible being disintegrated in many ways, and everything like structure falling away from it. You are told, for example, that these books—say the books of Moses—are made up of many documents. Well, I am not asking whether they are or whether they are not, just now; but it is said they are made up of documents which are very late in origin and cannot claim historical value. You are told that the laws they contain are also, for the most part, tolerably late, and the Levitical laws especially are of post-exilian construction; they were not given by Moses; they were unknown when the Children of Israel were carried into captivity. Their temple usage perhaps is embodied in the Levitical law, but most of the contents of that Levitical law were wholly unknown. They were the construction—the invention, to use a term lately employed—of priests and scribes in the post-exilian period. They were put into shape, they were brought up to the community returned from Babylon, they were accepted by them as the law of life. You have the history of the Bible turned pretty much upside down, and things take on a new aspect altogether.

Must I then, in deference to criticism, accept these theories, and give up the structure which the Bible presents? Now, just a word on that. Taking the

Bible as it stands, I find, and you will find if you look there also, without any particular critical learning you will find it—what seems to be evidence of a very definite internal structure, part fitting into part and leading on to part, making up a unity of the whole in that Bible. The Bible has undeniably a structure as it stands. It is distinguished from all other books of the kind, from all sacred books in the world, from Korans and Buddhist scriptures and Indian scriptures and every other kind of religious books. It is distinguished just by this fact, that it is the embodiment of a great plan or scheme or purpose of Divine Grace extending from the beginning of time through successive ages and dispensations down to its culmination in Jesus Christ and the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit. **The history** of the Bible is the history of that development of God's redemptive purpose. **The promises** of the Bible mark the stages of its progress and its hopes. **The covenants** of the Bible, these are the turning points, the epoch points in its advance. **The books** of the Bible stand before us in the order of its unfolding. You begin with Genesis. Well, Genesis lays the foundation and leads up to the book of Exodus; and the book of Exodus, with its introduction of the law giving, leads up to what follows. Deuteronomy looks back upon the history of the rebellions and the laws given to the people, and leads up to the conquest. I need not follow the later developments, coming away down through the monarchy and the prophecy and the rest, but you find it all gathered up and fulfilled in the New Testament. The Bible, as we have it, closes in gospel and epistle and apocalypse, fulfilling all the ideas of the Old

Testament. There the circle completes itself with the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Now, here is a structure; here is the fact; here is a structure, a connected story, a unity of purpose extending through this Book and binding all its parts together. Is that structure an illusion? Do we only—have men only—dreamed that is there? Do our eyes deceive us when we think we see it? Or has somebody of a later date invented it and put it all in—wrought it all in—these earlier records, legends and stories, or whatever you like to call it—skilfully woven it into the story until it presents there the appearance of naturalness and truth? I would like, friends, to find the mind capable of inventing it, and then the mind capable of putting it in and working it into a history once they got the idea itself. But if not invented, it belongs to the reality and the substance of the history; it belongs to the facts; and therefore to the Book that records the facts. And there is internal attestation in that structure of the Bible to the genuineness of its contents that protests against the efforts that are so often made to reduce it to fragments and shiver up that unity and turn it upside down. “Walk about this Zion; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well its bulwarks;” you will find there is something there which the art of man will not avail to overthrow.

“Now, that is all very well,” I hear someone say, “but then there are facts on the other side; there are those manifold proofs which our critical friends adduce that the Bible is really a collection of fragments and documents of much later date, and that the history is really quite a different thing



from what the Bible represents it to be." Well, are we to sit down and accept their dictum on that subject? When I turn to the evidence I don't find them to have that convincing power which our critical friends assign to them.

Now, I am not rejecting this kind of critical theory because it goes against my prejudices or traditions; I reject it simply because it seems to me the evidence does not sustain it, and that the stronger evidence is against it. I cannot go into details; but take just the one point that I have mentioned—this post-exilian origin of the Levitical law. I have told you what is said about that matter—that those laws and institutions that you find in the middle of the books of the Penteteuch—those laws and institutions there about priests and Levites and sacrifices and all that—that those had really no existence, they had no authoritative form, and most of them had no existence of any kind until after the Jews returned from Babylon, and then they were given out as a code of laws which the Jews accepted. That is the theory which is stated once and again. But just put yourself in the position of that returned community, and ask what the thing means. I put it to you as common sense people. These exiles had returned from Babylon. They had been organized into a new community. They had rebuilt their Temple, and then long years after that, when things had got into confusion, those two great men, Ezra and Nehemiah, came among them, and by and by Ezra produces and publicly proclaims this law of Moses—what he called the law of Moses, the law of God by the hand of Moses—which he had brought from Babylon. You

find a full description of what happened in the eighth chapter of the book of Nehemiah. Read it over carefully to yourself when you go home and try to realize the scene. He reads that from his pulpit of wood day after day to the people, and the interpreter gives the sense. Now, mind you, most of the things in this law, in this book that he is reading to the people, had never been heard of before—never had existed, in fact; priests and Levites such as are there described had never existed; the Tabernacle had never existed; all those laws and regulations had never existed. The law itself was long and complicated and burdensome, **but the marvellous thing is that the people meekly accept it all as Gospel—meekly accept it as law, at any rate**—and submit to it, and take upon themselves its burdens without a murmur of dissent.

That is a very remarkable thing to start with. But remember, further, what that community was. It was not a community with oneness of mind, but it was a community keenly divided in itself. If you read the narrative you will find that there were strong opposing factions in that community; there were parties strongly opposed to Ezra and Nehemiah and their reforms; there were many, as you see in the book of Malachi, who were religiously faithless in that community. But, marvellous to say, they all join in accepting this new and burdensome and hitherto unheard of law as the law of Moses, the law coming down to them from hoary antiquity. There were priests and Levites in that community who knew something about their own origin; they had genealogies and knew something about their own past. Now, according to the new theory, these Levites were quite a new order; they had never ex-

isted at all before the time of the exile, and they had come into existence through the sentence of degradation that the prophet Ezekiel had passed upon them in the 44th Chapter of his book. History is quite silent about this degradation. If anyone asks who carried out the degradation, or why was it carried out, or when was it done, and how came the priests to submit to the degradation, there is no answer to be given at all. But it came about somehow, so we are told.

And so these priests and Levites are there, and they stand and listen without astonishment as they learn from Ezra how the Levites had been set apart long centuries before in the wilderness by the hand of God, and had an ample tithe provision made for their support, and cities, and what not, set apart for them to live in. People knew a little about their past. These cities never had existed except on paper; but they took it all in. They are told about these cities, which they must have known had never existed as Levitical cities. They not only hear but they accept the heavy tithe burdens without a word of remonstrance, and they make a covenant with God pledging themselves to faithful obedience to all those commands. Those tithe laws, as we discover, had no actual relation to their situation at all. They were drawn up for a totally different case. They were drawn up for a state of things in which there were few priests and many Levites. The priests were only to get the tithe of a tenth, but in this restored community there were a great many priests and few Levites. The tithe laws did not apply at all, but they accepted these as laws of Moses.

And so I might go over the provisions of the law one by one—tabernacle and priests and ritual and sacrifices and day of Atonement—these things, in their post-exilian form, had never existed; they were spun out of the inventive brains of scribes; and yet the people accepted them all as the genuine handiwork of the ancient law-giver. Was ever such a thing heard of before? Try it in Toronto. Try and get the people to take upon themselves a series of heavy burdens of taxation or tithes or whatever you like, on the ground that it had been handed down from the middle ages to the present time. Try and get them to believe it; try and get them to obey it—and you will find the difficulty. Is it credible to anyone who leaves books and theories in the study and takes a broad view of human nature with open eyes? I aver that for me, at any rate, it is not; and it will be a marvel to me as long as I am spared to live, how such a theory has ever gained the acceptance it has done among unquestionably able and sound-minded men. Well, I leave that point about the structure of the Bible. I say that the structure of the Bible vindicates itself, and that these counter theories break down.

### **A SUPERNATURAL REVELATION.**

But now there is the other point; I will just say a word upon that. I think it is an essential element in a tenable doctrine of Scripture that it contains a record of a true supernatural revelation; and I fancy there is where we are coming to the core of the matter. And that is what the Bible claims to be—not a development of man's thoughts about God, and

not what this man and that one came to think about God, how they came to have the ideas of a Jehovah or Yahveh, who was originally the storm-god of Sinai, and how they manufactured out of this the great universal God of the prophets. That is not what the Bible teaches us, but it is the discovery of what God revealed of Himself in word and deed to men in history. And if that claim to a supernatural revelation from God falls, the Bible falls, because it is bound up with it from beginning to end. Now, it is just here that a great deal of our modern thought parts company with the Bible. I am quite well aware that many of our friends who accept these newer critical theories are just as firm believers in Divine revelation as I am myself, and in Jesus Christ and all that concerns Him. I rejoice in the fact, I delight in the fact, and I believe that they are warranted in saying that there is that in the religion of Israel which you cannot expunge, or explain on any other hypothesis but Divine revelation.

But what I maintain is that this theory of the religion of the Bible which has been evolved, which has peculiarly come to be known as the critical view, had a very different origin—in men who one and all did not believe in the supernatural revelation of God in the Bible. And the two elements never satisfactorily blend, and never will blend, and there will have to be a working of them out along their separate lines, and coming to an understanding, the bringing of our faith about the Bible into unity with itself. Now, there is a school—it is a widespread school—don't be mislead by the excellent sentiments of our believing friends, to think that it is the other side that is the exception here—it



is they who are the exceptions. You take this school as a whole, as a widespread school, and the fundamental position of it—the position which they call that of the modern mind—is that miracles did not happen and cannot happen. They take the ground that they are impossible; therefore they have to rule everything of that kind out of the Bible record.

Now, I have never been able to see how that position is tenable to a believer in a living personal God who really loves His creatures and has a sincere desire to bless them. Who dare venture to assert that the power and will of such a Being as we must believe God to be—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—is exhausted in the natural creation? That there are no higher things to be attained in God's providence than can be attained through the medium of natural law? That there is in such a Being no capability of revealing Himself in words and deeds beyond nature? If there is a dogmatism in the world, it is that of the man who claims to limit the Author of the universe by this finite bound. We are told sometimes that it is a far higher thing to see God in the natural than to see him in something that transcends the natural; a far higher thing to see God in the orderly regular working of nature than to suppose that there has ever been anything transcending that ordinary natural working. I think we all do see God, and try to see Him more and more in the ordinary and regular working of nature. I hope all try every day to see God there. But the question is, Has this natural working not its limits? Is there not something that nature and natural workings cannot reach, cannot do for men, that we need to have done for us?

And are we so to bind God that He cannot enter into communion with man in a supernatural economy of Grace, an economy of revelation, an economy of salvation? Are we to deny that He has done so? That is really the dividing line both in Old Testament and New between the different theories. Revelation surely all must admit if man is to attain the clear knowledge of God that is needed; and the question is on of fact: Has God so revealed Himself? And I believe that it is an essential part of the answer, the true doctrine of Scripture, to say, "Yes, God has so revealed Himself, and the Bible is the record of that revelation, and that revelation shines in its light from the beginning to the end of it." And unless there is a whole-hearted acceptance of the fact that God has entered, in word and deed, into human history for man's salvation, for man's renovation, for the deliverance of this world, a revelation culminating in the great Revealer Himself—unless we accept that we do not get the foundation for the true doctrine of Holy Scripture.

### THE INSPIRED RECORD.

Now, just a word in closing, on Inspiration. I don't think anyone will weigh the evidence of the Bible itself very carefully without saying that at least it claims to be in a peculiar and especial manner **an inspired book**. There is hardly anyone, I think, who will doubt that Jesus Christ treats the Old Testament in that way. Christ treats it as an imperfect stage of revelation, no doubt. Christ, as the Son of Man, takes up a lordly, discretionary attitude towards that revelation, and he supersedes very much that is in it by something higher, but Christ recognizes that

there was true Divine revelation there, that He was the goal of it all; He came to fulfil the law and the prophets. The Scriptures are the last word with Him—"Have ye not read?" "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." And it is just as certain that the apostles treated the Old Testament in that way, and that they claimed in a peculiar sense the Spirit of God for themselves. They claimed that in them and in their word was laid

### **THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH THE CHURCH WAS BUILT,**

Jesus Christ Himself, as the substance of their testimony, being the chief corner-stone: "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." And if you say, "Well, are these New Testament apostles and prophets?" That is in Ephesians, 2nd chapter. You go to the fifth verse of the third chapter and you find this mystery of Christ which God had revealed to His Holy apostles and prophets by His Spirit; and it is on that the Church was built. And when you come to Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 14-17), to that classical passage, you find the marks there by which inspired Scripture is distinguished.

Now take the book of Scripture and ask just this question: Does it answer to the claim of this inspired volume? How are we to test this? I do not enter here into the question that has divided good men as to theories of inspiration—questions about inerrancy in detail, and other matters. I want to get away from these things at the circumference to the centre. But take the broader test.

### **THE BIBLE'S OWN TEST OF INSPIRATION.**

What does the Bible itself give us as the test of its

inspiration? What does the Bible itself name as the qualities that inspiration imparts to it? Paul speaks in Timothy of the **Sacred** writings that were able to make wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. He goes on to tell us that **God-inspired Scripture** is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, in order that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work. When you go back to the Old Testament and its praise of the Word of God you find the qualities of inspiration are just the same. "The law of the Lord is perfect;" etc. Those are the qualities which the inspired Book is alleged to sustain—qualities which only a true inspiration of God's Spirit could give; qualities beyond which we surely do not need anything more.

Now, does anyone doubt that the Bible possesses these qualities? Look at its structure; look at its completeness; look at it in the clearness and fulness and holiness of its teachings; look at it in its sufficiency to guide every soul that truly seeks light unto the saving knowledge of God

I don't say the attesting power of every bit and line attests the inspiration of the genealogies in Chronicles, of the gloomy parts of Ecclesiastes. These have their place, their natural place in the plan and organism of Scripture, but it is not to these you will go if you want to find the qualities that attest its inspiration. But take the book as a whole, in its whole purpose, its whole spirit, its whole aim and tendency, and the whole setting of it, and ask, Is there not there manifest the power which you can only trace back, as it traces it back itself, to God's Holy Spirit really in the man who wrote it?









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